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Disarmament Commission

370th meeting

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New York

Chair: Ms. Bird ..... (Australia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

General debate *(continued)*

The Chair: The United Nations Disarmament Commission will this afternoon continue its general exchange of views with the list of speakers inscribed for the general debate. I would urge those delegations that have not yet done so to inscribe themselves on the list as soon as possible.

I would also like to remind delegations of the time limits for statements, namely, 15 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of the groups and 10 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity. I would also like to thank the delegations that have spoken so far for strictly adhering to the time limits, which will help us get through our work in a timely fashion.

Mr. Laouani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset, the Arab Group would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission for this year. Our congratulations also go to Jamaica and Belgium for having been elected to chair the Commission's two Working Groups. We reaffirm our cooperation with you and the two Chairs to guarantee the success of this session and to continue to build on the gains from the previous session, namely, the adoption of substantive recommendations for the first time since 1999 following the establishment of the Disarmament Commission as a United Nations organ, which is an essential part of the disarmament machinery and charged with the responsibility of reaching agreements on disarmament issues, pursuant to the mandate established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978.

The Group welcomes the decision taken in the Conference on Disarmament to establish subsidiary bodies to discuss certain subjects. We hope that that decision will lead to the revitalization of the Conference with a view to ending the paralysis it has suffered from for decades, as it is the sole negotiating body within the United Nations disarmament machinery.

The Arab Group emphasizes the fact that the attainment of peace, security and stability in the world will not be possible as long as nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction continue to exist. That is why it is essential once and for all to eliminate such weapons under international control and with international verification. We must also allocate financial and human resources for human development, especially in the light of the current delicate state of affairs in the world, that is, the rising levels of tensions and the outbreak of regional and international conflicts.

The Group is concerned about the continual failure to make progress on nuclear disarmament. We are further concerned that there have been a number of implementation failures, namely, with regard to the second decision of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the 13

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recommendations from the 2000 and 2015 Review Conferences and the recommendations and procedures of the outcome document of the 2010 Review Conference.

In fact, nuclear-weapon States are taking advantage of any delay to hold off on fulfilling their international agreements aimed at the elimination of nuclear weapons. In that regard, the consensus agreements of the 2010 Review Conference have not been implemented. The Arab Group hopes that, on the heels of the 2015 Review Conference, that stalemate will be broken. To that end, we presented a new proposal, which was submitted as a road map and was adopted by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. However, the positive approach on our part was not favourably received by three States, including two nuclear-weapon States that are depositaries for the Treaty. They broke with the international consensus and prevented the Conference, through its final document, from adopting practical procedures for the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. That calls into question the seriousness of those countries to respect the goals of the Treaty and to make legal, political and moral commitments with regard to the universality of the Treaty, including and maintaining its sustainability and credibility. We call upon those States to put an immediate end to the policy of double standards being used to defend the interests and positions of Israel to the detriment of regional and international security. We reiterate that it is the collective responsibility of the international community to ensure that the Middle East is free of nuclear weapons. The Arab Group has played its role and others must do the same, otherwise the credibility and sustainability of the Non-Proliferation Treaty will jeopardized and the overall international disarmament and security system could be undermined.

The failure of the 2015 Review Conference and the failure of the nuclear-weapon States to respect nuclear -disarmament commitments have left the international community with the responsibility to accelerate the achievement of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. A historic event occurred in 2017, which was rather unusual — the adoption of the first legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. Together with the legal commitment, it is a new source of international law governing nuclear disarmament and confirms the fact that nuclear weapons are inhumane. Their use or threat of use is at variance with the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and therefore runs counter to international peace and security. The Arab States are committed to making a positive contribution to international agreements on the elimination of nuclear weapons in line with their commitments under the various international treaties and agreements with multilateral bodies.

The Arab States would like the discussions in the Disarmament Commission to contribute to making progress on current efforts to guarantee the success of the 2020 Review Conference, which coincides with the end of the current cycle of the Commission. We hope that results will be positive and contribute to a satisfactory outcome of the high-level conference on nuclear disarmament to be held in May, which would allow us to bridge the widening confidence gap between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear States. It would also ensure the non-nuclear-weapon States intention to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and global nuclear disarmament in a legally binding and consensus-based time frame.

All Arab countries have acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. All Arab States submit information on their nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which Israel has not yet done despite many United Nations requests. The Arab Group underscores that a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction constitutes the fourth pillar of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is just as important as the three other pillars.

Since 1995 to date, we have noted no concrete progress with regard to that commitment, despite the fact that that decision was taken as part of the 1995 commitment that stipulated the indefinite extension of the Treaty with regard to the situation in the Middle East. That means that the failure to honour that commitment calls into question the other pillars. The Arab States hope that at the current session the Commission will agree on clear recommendations for nuclear disarmament. That depends on the political will of the nuclear-weapon States, which have deliberately prevented the publication of recommendations on the issue, despite its importance, contrary to the consultative nature of this forum.

The Arab Group welcomes the inclusion of a special agenda item on recommendations for confidence-building with regard to the prohibition of an arms race in outer space. In that regard, the Arab

Group underscores that it is important that the results adopted by the Commission on that agenda item be in line with the following principles.

First, outer space is the common heritage of humankind. That is why all human activities in space must take place within the framework of the various United Nations bodies in order to guarantee universality and non-discrimination and to implement international consensus.

Secondly, all efforts aimed at establishing rules for the use of outer space should strengthen its use for the common good of all countries and all peoples. That is why they should not run counter to the inherent right of all States to use outer space for non-armaments-related purposes.

Thirdly, pending the adoption of a universal and legally binding instrument, outer space should remain free from conflicts, wars or an arms race. It is therefore important to prohibit the deployment of weapons in outer space for the purposes of defence or the launching of attacks. An arms race in outer space or any attack against space objects should be prohibited.

Fourthly, we underscore the importance of technological exchanges on outer space, technical cooperation and assistance to and capacity-building for developing countries.

Lastly, the Arab Group hopes that the current session of the Disarmament Commission will lead to additional well-balanced results, which will revitalize global disarmament efforts. Once again, Madam, we assure you of our full support in that regard.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 substantive session. My delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation. We also extend our congratulations to the Vice-Chairs and the Chairs of the Working Groups — Jamaica and Belgium.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and oy the representative of Nigeria on behalf of theGroup of African States (see A/CN.10/PV.369), as well as that just delivered by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Algeria attaches the utmost importance to general and complete disarmament as a means of ensuring international peace. We reiterate our continued commitment to multilateral diplomacy as the core principle of disarmament negotiations. In that context, my delegation reaffirms the central role of the United Nations as a universal multilateral forum to address disarmament issues, as well as the relevance and centrality of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We stress the particular importance of this session coming at the end of the current cycle. The UNDC is expected to adopt recommendations related to its two substantive agenda items. In that regard, we expect that it will fulfil its mandate and achieve a meaningful outcome to advance towards global disarmament and non-proliferation. To that end, my delegation calls upon all Member States to show the political will and flexibility required in order to allow the UNDC to reach agreement on substantive recommendations to the General Assembly.

As a State party to the main treaties related to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, my delegation strongly believes that nuclear disarmament remains its highest priority and reiterates its deep concern over the existence of nuclear weapons and their potential use or threat of use. My delegation, like many others, highlights that the only guarantee against nuclear weapons lies in their total elimination, with a view to achieving a world free of nuclear danger.

We seize this opportunity to stress once again the need for collective efforts to universalize the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to ensure compliance, in a balanced and comprehensive approach, with each of its three pillars. In that regard, my delegation reaffirms the legitimate right to develop research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

On the other hand, we note with deep concern, as many other Member States have done, the evident lack of progress in the process of multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, in particular regarding the implementation of the 13 measures aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the plan of action adopted by the 2010 Review Conference. My delegation reaffirms that nuclear-weapon States in particular have to fully comply with their obligations under the NPT, namely, the provisions on nuclear disarmament. My delegation would like to assure members that my country, Algeria,

looks forward to fully participating in the preparatory process for the 2020 NPT Review Conference and calls upon all States parties to seize this opportunity to achieve nuclear-disarmament objectives.

My delegation reiterates the deep concern of my country over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the detonation of a nuclear weapon. In this firm conviction, Algeria has endorsed the humanitarian pledge and will join in efforts to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. Based on that firm belief, Algeria, which in September 2017 was among the first countries to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, considers this landmark Treaty to be a necessary step in delegitimizing nuclear weapons and in establishing paths towards their total elimination. We call upon all member States to join it. In that regard, my delegation expresses its appreciation and thanks to the States that have contributed to the adoption of this historic Treaty and to civil society for their crucial role in this initiative.

My delegation reiterates the importance of convening a high-level international conference to review progress made in nuclear disarmament, and emphasizes the need for early and appropriate preparation in order to ensure a successful conference. We stress the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in order to allow its entry into force and to contribute to the global process of nuclear disarmament. We also call upon those remaining States to ratify it without any further delay, particularly annex 2 States whose ratification is required to bring the Treaty into force. My delegation wishes to underscore once again the need for the conclusion of a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes not only a confidence-building measure, but also an important step towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. In that context, let me stress that Algeria, which was among the first countries to have drafted, signed and ratified the Pelindaba Treaty, calls in particular on nuclear-weapon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant annexes to the Treaty.

The example of the Pelindaba Treaty and other nuclear-weapon-free zones should also be followed in the volatile region of the Middle East. In that regard, my delegation deeply regrets that that part of the world remains prohibited from and deprived of enjoying such a status, despite the adoption at the 1995 NPT Review Conference and the indefinite extension of the 1995 resolution concerning the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in this region. My delegation reaffirms that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East remains valid and stresses its strong commitment to its full implementation.

My delegation underscores the strong view of my country that outer space, as the common heritage of all humankind, must be explored and utilized for exclusively peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all States, irrespective of the degree of their social, economic or scientific development. We remain deeply concerned over developments related to an arms race in outer space. The existing legal regime to prevent an arms race in outer space has deficiencies, and it is therefore necessary to step up efforts. In that context, my delegation reiterates its call for the commencement of negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. That remains a priority.

The militarization of outer space could lead to an arms race. In addition, the development and placement of anti-ballistic systems in space will have a negative security impact. In that context, Algeria welcomes the adoption of resolution 72/250, by which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the success achieved last year by the Working Group on conventional weapons. We hope that the UNDC will make sufficient progress during this cycle in order to adopt meaningful recommendations. We look forward to positive Member State engagement during our deliberations, with the political will and flexibility necessary to allow the UNDC to conclude its session successfully.

Mr. Castro Córdoba (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election to direct the work of the Disarmament Commission. They can count on the full support of my delegation in the exercise of their functions. We extend our congratulations and support

to the Chairs of the two Working Groups during this session.

The international community has wanted to achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament ever since the terrible humanitarian consequences and the risk of nuclear weapons became evident. We live in a world characterized by instability and daily threats to international peace and security. That is why we commend the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which categorically prohibits nuclear weapons in international law, including their use and threat of use. This prohibition plays a fundamental role in efforts to achieve the irreversible, verifiable and transparent elimination of such weapons.

It is imperative that all States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, eliminate references to the use of such weapons in their doctrines, security policies and military strategies. We have borne witness, in particular in recent weeks in the area of nuclear disarmament, to the fact that inaction is not an option. Maintaining the status quo only exposes us to increasingly dangerous international security situations. That is why Costa Rica is taking steps to ensure the prompt ratification of the Treaty as a demonstration of its commitment to strengthening the legal and political norms against nuclear weapons and towards the delegitimization of their use. Seven countries have ratified the Treaty and we are convinced that soon, it will have the 50 ratifications required for its entry into force, with a view to its universalization.

Costa Rica is a country committed to disarmament and, as such, we expect that relevant progress will be made in all disarmament-related forums. We welcome the upcoming High-Level International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, to be held in May. We urge all States to participate in the Conference in order to continue uniting efforts and commitments to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is equally important as nuclear disarmament. Both are key to the effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is complementary and will contribute decisively to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to the NPT, with a view to the total elimination of such weapons of mass destruction. For us, it is particularly important to strengthen such instruments and ensure that they are implemented. We recognize the incontestable importance of the NPT to the global non-proliferation regime, and, in line with article VI, it is vital to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament. It is an important element in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We deplore the fact that no consensus was reached at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We urge all States to participate constructively in the preparations for the 2020 Conference and to find the political will to ensure a tangible and ambitious outcome.

The presence of nuclear weapons increases tensions, creates mistrust and poses a constant threat to humankind. To date, progress to decrease existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons has been modest, and ample resources continue to be invested in the development and modernization of nuclear weapons. It is essential to stop disproportionate investment in the modernization and extension of the shelf life of such weapons and the ongoing irresponsible nuclear tests. The main goal of our actions has always been the same; the ethical objective of nuclear disarmament is to ensure that humankind will never face the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons or the risk of an accidental or intentional detonation.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is vital. We again urge the States that have not yet ratified it, in particular the eight annex 2 nuclear-weapon States, to do so as soon as possible. It is our duty to address non-compliance with international obligations and encourage the transparency and implementation of existing instruments.

The reality is that each day we increase our depend enceon space and information technologies. This requires us to work together to face threats to the sustainability and security of outer space activities, and it is for that reason that the development of confidence-building measures is needed. In line with the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts in its report, the sharing of information on national space policies, such as military spending and on outer space activities, should be included. We must encourage confidence-building measures to underscore our common interest in promoting greater exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes for the benefit and interests of all States.

All such efforts are in line with the current legal international framework on outer space activities. We support the start of negotiations on a legally binding instrument for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to negotiate a treaty. My country also believes it necessary to encourage international cooperation among those States that have developed space programmes and those that have not, in particular in the area of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, in the basic understanding that it will benefit all States.

The Disarmament Commission must take this opportunity to regain its relevance in the disarmament architecture. Its adoption at the previous session of substantive recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms was indeed a step towards that end. We must take advantage of that renewed resolve so as to continue to make progress on achieving positive results. There are myriad threats to international peace and security, and we must take advantage of all forums to address them. That is why we call for the necessary political will to be mustered so that the Disarmament Commission can contribute to that goal and our deliberations during these three weeks can produce substantive recommendations on those important issues.

I would like to reiterate the constructive participation of my delegation during this process.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): On behalf of the delegation of the United States, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, and the Government of Australia on your election to chair the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 session. You can count on our delegation's full support as you guide the work of the Commission. We also congratulate the other members of this year's Bureau on their elections and express our appreciation to the Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for his presentation this morning (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

As the United States national security strategy, national defence strategy and nuclear posture review all make clear, the return of Great Power competition is a major factor in shaping United States policy. In addition to expanding their nuclear capabilities, Russia and China are seeking to reshape the post-Second World War international order in ways antithetical to United States values and interests. Our nuclear and defence postures focus on identifying the policies, strategy and capabilities needed to protect the United States, our allies and partners in today's deteriorating threat environment.

More than 70 years after the Second World War, the United States and its allies and partners strive to maintain and defend democratic institutions and traditions against potential aggression in Europe, Asia and around the world. Effective United States extended nuclear deterrence plays a critical role in that effort by ensuring allied and partner security, international stability and nuclear non-proliferation.

Farther afield, North Korea continues its prohibited nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes, which are inherently destabilizing and threatening to much of the world. Iran continues its missile programmes and destabilizing activities in the Middle East. As President Trump stated in announcing our South Asia strategy in August last year:

> "We must prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists and being used against us, or anywhere in the world, for that matter."

Recent years have also seen an increase in the use of chemical weapons by State and non-State actors, most frequently in Syria and now with the first and only use of a nerve agent in European history just last month in Salisbury. The United States believes that Russia is responsible for the attack in the United Kingdom using a military-grade nerve agent, either through deliberate use or through its failure to secure its stocks of that nerve agent, which put countless innocent lives at risk and resulted in serious injury to three people, including a police officer. We will continue to stand in absolute solidarity with Great Britain. This past week, 29 countries and NATO took significant, coordinated action that laid bare the unacceptability of Russia's dangerous and destabilizing behaviour.

We ignore security challenges at our peril. We simply must see the world as it is. We call on all States to redouble their collective efforts to address the real and growing threats that have led to a deterioration in the global security environment.

Let me now turn to Working Group I and offer best wishes to Mrs. Diedre Mills, Deputy Permanent Representative of Jamaica, on her election to chair that important body, which is tasked with devising

recommendations on the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The wording of the agenda topic for the Working Group has not changed in many years, and in all of that time it has yet to come close to a consensus result. Despite our best efforts, the reality is that seemingly incompatible priorities and expectations have prevented the Commission from making any headway on this topic. Unless we can refocus on our shared interests, we are likely to fare no better in the 2018-2020 cycle.

In the hope of fostering a more productive disarmament discourse, we have begun to articulate a new approach that takes into account and tries to address the problematic and worsening geopolitical conditions of the present day. We call this the "creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament" approach. This Commission is an ideal forum to contribute to a constructive dialogue on the development of measures that may be effective in creating the conditions necessary for further progress to be made towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. We invite all States to join with us in crafting a new way forward — one that will help us to gradually make progress together towards easing tensions and strengthening trust between States in order to facilitate disarmament. We look forward to discussing the creation of the conditions necessary for further progress in Working Group I and at the next session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which begins on 23 April in Geneva.

We also congratulate Belgium's Deputy Permanent Representative, Ambassador Jeroen Cooreman, on his election to chair Working Group II, on outer space transparency and confidence-building measures. The United States was pleased to play a role in adding this critical issue to the Disarmament Commission's 2018-2020 issue cycle. Space systems benefit not only their immediate users, owners and operators, but also the global economy and security environment, as well as individual nations and societies. We must work to ensure the continued success of these beneficial activities.

Outer space also has an important role to play in maintaining international peace and security. Many countries are purchasing satellites to support their own military activities. Other space systems can be used to monitor compliance with international arms control agreements. Unfortunately, some countries believe that the ability to attack space assets offers an asymmetric advantage and, as a result, are pursuing a range of anti-satellite weapons. While the United States would prefer that the space domain remain free of conflict, we will meet and overcome any challenge that may arise. In that regard, the new United States space strategy calls for protecting our vital interests in space and strengthening the safety, stability and sustainability of our outer space activities.

The United States will continue to focus on the pursuit of bilateral and multilateral transparency and confidence-building measures to encourage responsible actions in space, rather than engaging in pointless and protracted negotiations to conclude a legally binding instrument.

The United States has already undertaken a number of activities consistent with the recommendations of the 2013 consensus Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space (see A/68/189), and during our deliberations over the next few weeks, the United States will provide its views on those accomplishments. Pursuant to five General Assembly resolutions, States members of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Conference on Disarmament and the Commission have been encouraged to review and implement, to the greatest extent practicable, the proposed transparency and confidence-building measures contained in the Group of Governmental Experts report. We look forward to contributing to the Commission's work on this topic.

Finally, the ability of the Disarmament Commission to reach consensus recommendations on its conventional weapons agenda item last year was a clear demonstration that the existing, consensus-based multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations can and will deliver results when States' interests are aligned. The key to our success in 2017 was that, for the first time in years, no member State blocked consensus agreement in the Working Group on conventional weapons because of a lack of consensus in the nuclear Working Group. Member States should pledge to continue that practice as a contribution to improving the effectiveness of the Commission. For its part, the United States will do all that it can to promote a successful Disarmament Commission session this year and beyond.

Mr. Amiya (Japan): At the outset, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, I would like to congratulate you,

Madam Chair, and the Government of Australia on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Commission Bureau. I assure you and the Bureau members of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Last year, the Disarmament Commission successfully adopted the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons by consensus, breaking the 17-year deadlock. Japan welcomes that positive development and reiterates its hope that we will all work together to find a way to further reinvigorate the Disarmament Commission, which was once renowned as the leading deliberative United Nations body in the field of disarmament. Japan will continue to actively participate in the Commission and looks forward to working together with other member States.

In order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we should advance nuclear-disarmament efforts with the participation of nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike, taking into account existing security threats. Japan will continuously call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its universalization. We also call for maintaining all existing moratoriums on nuclear test explosions.

With respect to the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT), we hope that the discussion at the High-Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group and its informal consultative meeting, open to all States Members of the United Nations, will provide the impetus needed to break out of the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and pave the way for the commencement of an FMCT negotiation in the CD. Moreover, increasing the transparency of nuclear arsenals is important, since the verification of irreversible nuclear disarmament requires transparency.

The international community faces rising tension in the security environment. North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes pose an unprecedented, grave and imminent threat to the entire international community, which must reaffirm that a nuclear-armed North Korea will never be accepted. Despite North Korea's recent engagement in dialogue and moves towards denuclearization, we should judge North Korea's intention in the light of what it is actually doing, not what we hope it is doing. We need to ensure that North Korea's words give way to concrete actions towards the goal of thecomplete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles. Japan reaffirms that a maximum-pressure campaign should remain in place until North Korea changes its course and takes decisive, irreversible steps to denuclearize. In that regard, Japan calls for the cooperation and unity on the part of the international community.

As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings in wartime, Japan has been at the forefront of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in our joint endeavour towards a world free of nuclear weapons. It is our view that nuclear disarmament must be promoted based on two understandings: a clear understanding of the humanitarian impacts of the use of nuclear weapons and an objective assessment of the reality of the security situation As a basis for promoting concrete and practical nuclear-disarmament measures based on those two understandings, it is imperative to maintain and strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime. In that regard, all NPT member States, including nuclear-weapon States, need to fulfil their obligations under article VI while cooperating to achieve non-proliferation.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of the international nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In order to strengthen the NPT regime, it is vital to achieve a meaningful outcome at the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Seizing every opportunity, Japan will make the utmost effort to that end through the 2020 NPT review process. Japan will, as a member of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, continue to strengthen cooperation with other States and groups of States. Japan will provide input based on recommendations made by the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament, which is to achieve substantive advancement of nuclear disarmament based on rebuilding cooperation and trust among countries through various approaches, to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

The importance of outer space activities has never been greater. However, serious challenges, such as congestion in space and a greater volume of space debris, have emerged that need to be addressed with urgency. It has become critical for the welfare and development of all humankind to ensure the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities. Japan supports

efforts to that end and has worked tirelessly to preserve the environment of outer space. We believe that it is important to develop initiatives to ensure confidence and mutual trust among space actors, in particular through transparency and confidence-building measures. In that regard, we are prepared to engage constructively in the discussion on the preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer-space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space.

In order to enhance the security and sustainability of outer space, Japan supports non-binding but verifiable transparency and confidence-building measures, which are the most likely to gain wide acceptance and adherence within the international community. Japan reaffirms the importance of enhancing the rule of law in outer space and will continue to work with other nations to that end. In that connection, we reiterate the need to implement principles of responsible behaviour for outer space activities, which could be an important step in terms of international rule-making. In particular, we encourage all States to refrain from any action that brings about — directly or indirectly — the damage or destruction of space objects. We therefore continue to express our concerns about the development of anti-satellite-weapons capability.

Last but not least, it is important for us to continually work together to produce constructive outcomes in accordance with the Commission's original mandate so that we can have a positive impact on the United Nations disarmament machinery. Japan will endeavour to ensure that the first year of the current triennial cycle leads to a positive outcome.

Mr. Khoshroo (Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam, and other Bureau members on your and their election. I also assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Likewise, I associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

This cycle of the Disarmament Commission begins at a time when we are faced with two alarming trends: a new nuclear arms race and a nuclear-arms modernization race. If we are to prevent those trends from having further detrimental effects on international peace and security, they need to come to an end. We should not allow the monstrous shadow of the threat of those inhumane weapons on our life to continue indefinitely. We should consume them all before they consume us all. That indeed is our collective responsibility as it relates to the security of each and every one of us. However, it is obvious that the nuclear-weapon States have a particular and heavier responsibility. Besides a legal obligation, they also have an ethical and moral responsibility. They cannot and should not continue to stubbornly insist on such obscure and unrealistic strategies as deterrence. They cannot seek their security at the price of the insecurity of others.

The non-compliance of those States with their explicit legal obligations and commitments to eliminate all their nuclear-weapon arsenals has clearly proved their lack of genuine political will in fulfilling their obligations. The statement by a certain nuclear-weapon State that it wants more nuclear weapons so that it can remain at the top of the pack indicates that such extremely irresponsible policies will continue. Consequently, we need to redouble our efforts in confronting such bullying policies. While the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017 was a step forward in that direction, we should continue to firmly call for the early commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction.

Against that backdrop, efforts during the current cycle of the Disarmament Commission should be focused on adopting recommendations on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. That, of course, should be complemented by our efforts in pursuing the second agenda item of the Commission, which is related to preventing an arms race in outer space. If we are to ensure that outer space, as the common heritage and province of all humankind, is explored and used exclusively for peaceful purposes, preventing an arms race therein is a must, not an option. In any case, the work of the Commission should be guided by the urgency, high priority and prime importance of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We attach great importance to that issue in the Middle East, where decades-long regional and international efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone, proposed by Iran in 1974, have been impeded thus far by the stubborn objection of the Israeli regime.

Therefore, compelling Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, without any preconditions and as a non-nuclear-weapon party, and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should be an important element of the relevant recommendations of the Commission.

Recalling the firm calls for the full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by all its participants, I stress that it definitely is essential for its continued relevance and continuity. For its part, as verified and confirmed by the IAEA, reflected in its 10 consecutive reports to date, Iran has fully implemented all its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. However, the current irresponsible and destructive approach, policy and practice of the United States regarding the JCPOA has seriously challenged its continuity. United States actions contradict the letter, spirit and intent of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), particularly paragraphs 26, 28 and 29, through which commitments are made to

> "make best efforts in good faith to sustain this JCPOA and to prevent interference with the realization of the full benefit by Iran of the sanctions lifting";
>
> "make every effort to support the successful implementation of this JCPOA including in their public statements";
>
> and
>
> "refrain from any policy specifically intended to directly and adversely affect the normalization of trade and economic relations with Iran inconsistent with their commitments not to undermine the successful implementation of this JCPOA".

As we have stated time and again, the JCPOA is not a one-way street. Therefore, implementation by Iran of its commitments can continue only if all other parties continue to implement their commitments fully, effectively and unconditionally. It is obvious that Iran will react proportionately to any continued significant non-implementation of the JCPOA commitments on the part of one of its participants.

I have to stress that the JCPOA cannot be renegotiated or altered. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the sole authority that may verify Iran's commitment under the JCPOA. Iran continues to provisionally apply the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement and, according to the latest IAEA report, the Agency

> "has conducted complementary accesses under the Additional Protocol to all the sites and locations in Iran which it needed to visit."

The continuation of this situation is dependent on the continued unconditional implementation of the JCPOA by other parties, in particular the United States. Iran cannot and will not continue to save the JCPOA at any cost. It is definitely undoable.

The international community should not allow the United States administration to continue to mock and undermine the JCPOA. It is not in the interest of multilateralism. Preventing that is a collective responsibility.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): At the outset, let me join other delegations in congratulating you, Madam, on assuming your position as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 substantive session. We further extend our congratulations to the Working Group Chairs on their election. My delegation is looking forward to working with them to make this session a success.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

Allow me to make a few general remarks on the two agenda items before us, which my delegation looks forward to discussing in detail during the thematic debates. South Africa remains committed to multilateralism as the best tool for dealing with issues affecting international peace and security.

We reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the only universal and main deliberative and inclusive platform on critical issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Disarmament Commission has in the past made valuable contributions to our work in the field of disarmament and international security, and we call on all delegations to show the necessary flexibility so as to allow this body to carry out its responsibilities.

We welcome the gains made during the 2017 session of the Disarmament Commission, which

agreed by consensus on the recommendations on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. However, we remain concerned about the lack of progress on the nuclear disarmament agenda item since 1999. It is my delegation's hope and in our collective interest that the discussions and deliberations during the next two weeks will be based on genuine political will and good faith, and that we will be able to make progress.

On the issue of nuclear disarmament, my delegation joins the majority of Member States that have expressed deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would befall humankind in case of a nuclear detonation, whether by design or by accident. Only the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the legally binding assurance that they will never be produced again will guarantee a world free from the threat posed by nuclear weapons. Also of serious concern is the continuing modernization of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery by some nuclear-weapon States, in flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the solemn undertakings made at previous NPT Review Conferences in this regard.

My delegation welcomes as a bold and positive step the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017. South Africa was among the first 50 countries that signed the Treaty when it was opened for signature on 20 September 2017 in New York. We call on all States that are committed to the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons and that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty in order to facilitate its early entry into force.

The Treaty is fully consistent with the NPT and endeavours to contribute to the fulfilment of the latter's obligations, including the obligation under article VI to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures towards nuclear disarmament. It neither detracts from nor adds to the safeguards regime established under the NPT, nor does it preclude the further strengthening of any safeguards regime or the additional measures that States may have already committed to or may undertake in future. As with the NPT, any State joining the Treaty is required, as a minimum, to conclude and implement a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We reiterate that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is not the final word on nuclear weapons, but a critical step in the evolution of the regime that would be required to achieve and eventually maintain a world without nuclear weapons. Importantly, the Treaty does not prioritize the security interests of one or a few States above the security interests of the international community as a whole, but rather recognizes that nuclear weapons pose a threat to all States and all peoples everywhere.

My delegation wishes to reiterate that our support for a prohibition treaty is without prejudice to the realization of existing nuclear-disarmament commitments, particularly those agreed to in the context of the NPT. As we approach the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, in Geneva, it is imperative to recognize that the vitality and relevance of the NPT as the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, are dependent on the extent to which State parties implement their obligations and commitments. It is not acceptable for State parties to treat their obligations and commitments as an à la carte menu from which they can choose. We call upon all States parties to the NPT to honour their obligations and to faithfully and without precondition implement all commitments agreed to in 1995, 2000 and 2010 without any further delay, including the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Lastly, we join others in reaffirming the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. South Africa also believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are symbiotically and inextricably linked elements of the NPT and, therefore, progress in both elements is essential to realizing the objective and purpose of the NPT.

We view the second agenda item entitled, "Recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space", as critical to the maintenance of peace and security. It is widely acknowledged that outer space and its exploration for peaceful purposes are playing a vital and ever-increasing role in our daily lives. It is therefore important to ensure that substantive work is undertaken to prevent it from becoming a new arena for conflict.

South Africa believes that the best way to promote the order, safety, security and the sustainability of

outer space activities and to preserve outer space as a domain for peaceful activities is through international cooperation and dialogue. We will therefore continue to support and engage international efforts to develop rules of the road and norms for behaviour in space. If we are to achieve the widest possible adherence to such rules and norms, there is no alternative to open and transparent multilateral processes, in which all interested States can participate on an equal basis. Key to such efforts is the extent to which all States are able to gain access to and benefit from outer space, regardless of their level of scientific, technical and economic development. In that connection, we look forward to discussion on that subject over the next two weeks.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to further elaborating on the two agenda items during the thematic debates and stands ready to participate actively during discussions and to work with all delegations towards achieving a consensus outcome during this session.

Finally, we wish to thank all delegations for the condolences, messages and solidarity expressed in relation to the passing of our icon and pillar of anti-apartheid struggle, Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela.

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Ambassador Bird, on your election to preside over the substantive session of the 2018 United Nations Disarmament Commission. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My country recognizes the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the deliberative — and therefore universal — organ of the General Assembly that enables inclusive debates with a view to considering a great number of questions in the field of disarmament and generating recommendations on such questions. In that connection, we are pleased to have participated in the 2018 session with the goal of reaching concrete consensus agreements, including recommendations that are based in reality and targeted to provide solutions to new and traditional challenges in disarmament.

El Salvador, as a party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — a political, legal and institutional benchmark in the more than 50 years of creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones — reiterates its position in favour of nuclear disarmament and expresses its opposition to the improvement of current nuclear weapons and the development of new types thereof. The ongoing existence of nuclear weapons and their role in strategic doctrines and security policies continue to be a clear threat to humankind. We reiterate the urgent need to advance towards the primary goal of nuclear disarmament under international monitoring.

In that regard, we welcome the fact that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has been adopted and is open for signature. The Treaty prohibits the possession, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. We believe that once the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force, it will bolster and supplement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime in general. That is why we call on the international community to accelerate its entry into force.

We reject all attempts to edit the texts on nuclear disarmament, as well as the attempts of some States to change the paradigm in that regard. We invite the entire United Nations membership to join efforts aimed at consolidating effective, non-delaying measures for general and complete disarmament. My delegation urges nuclear-weapon States to review and withdraw all of their reservations to the Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and to respect the denuclearized nature of my region. We also echo calls to work on the negotiation and adoption of a universal, legally binding instrument on negative security assurances.

We also express our deep disappointment over the lack of consensus in the 2015 NPT Review Conference. Not reaching an agreement on the provisions of the final document is a failure that should also serve as a stimulus for the preparatory process of the 2020 Review Conference.

With regard to outer space, my country has a shared interest in promoting and expanding the use and exploration of outer space for exclusively peaceful means and in the benefit and interest of all States, regardless of their society's economic or scientific level of development. Moreover, we reaffirm that the growing global dependence on space systems and technologies and the information they provide us require collaborative efforts in order to confront the challenges to and the sustainability and security of outer space activities. Transparency and confidence-building measures

can reduce or even eliminate misunderstandings and miscalculations with regard to States' activities and intentions in outer space. We stress that transparency and confidence-building measures should supplement the current international legal framework relating to outer space activities and neither undermine existing obligations nor interfere with the legal use of outer space, particularly for new participants.

We believe that, as set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189), the exchange of information on national space policies should be included, as should military expenditures, notifications of outer space activities aimed at risk mitigation and visits to facilities and bases for space launches. Understanding the general interest in outer space and the fact that outer space is considered to be world heritage, El Salvador categorically rejects any attempt to militarize or start an arms race in outer space.

The Conference on Disarmament, headquartered in Geneva, is the only specialized organ for negotiations within the multilateral disarmament mechanism. In that regard, we regret that the Conference has been unable to fulfil its mandate for two decades. El Salvador urges all members of the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate political resolve so as to ensure the launch, without further delay, of substantive efforts through the adoption and implementation of a balanced and comprehensive programme to advance the agenda of nuclear disarmament, including a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances, as well as to prevent an arms race in outer space and to draft a non-discriminatory treaty that bans the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices that will serve both non-proliferation and disarmament purposes.

Nevertheless, we must recall that, as has been made apparent by negotiations such as those leading to the Arms Trade Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the opposition of a few members in a closed organ such as the Conference on Disarmament cannot prevent the universal membership of the Organization from advancing in its non-proliferation efforts. We therefore call on the Conference on Disarmament to assume its role or be rendered irrelevant.

We are pleased that after 18 years, the United Nations Disarmament Commission has adopted, by consensus, substantive recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the sphere of conventional weapons. That positive outcome is a success and generates momentum for revitalizing the disarmament machinery.

El Salvador calls on all delegations to show political will from the start of the three-year cycle of the Disarmament Commission so as to end the cycle with effective recommendations that truly meet the challenges of the issue.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election to this important position. We hope that, with your professional guidance, we will maintain the positive momentum in the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission that developed over the past session.

Russia has consistently called for strengthening the central role of the United Nations in maintaining strategic stability and international security, as well as the arms-control and non-proliferation regimes. We strongly believe that our priority is to strengthen the overall United Nations disarmament machinery, of which the United Nations Disarmament Commission is an integral part.

This year we begin a new three-year work cycle with a new agenda. We must all continue to strive to reach agreement on the recommendations in order to attain our goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as to launch a discussion on a completely new agenda item, namely, the preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. The Russian delegation is ready to do its utmost to achieve results in both those areas.

Russia is a responsible and consistent supporter of nuclear disarmament and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We continue to make our particular contribution to that process. On 5 February, we affirmed that our country had fully complied with its obligations to reduce the number of such weapons under the New START Treaty. Our overall capacity turned out to be even lower than the limits on delivery systems and warheads provided for in the Treaty. Russia therefore reduced its nuclear arsenal by more

than 85 per cent as compared with the stockpiles at the height of the Cold War.

We believe that the efforts of the international community towards nuclear disarmament should now focus on establishing conditions for further progress. While we must involve all States that possess a military nuclear potential in efforts to reduce and to control nuclear weapons, systematic collective efforts to establish conditions conducive to continuing the process of nuclear disarmament, including both global and regional security, are particularly relevant.

To that end, we must take into account an entire range of factors that affect international stability, including the unlimited deployment of the United States global missile defence system, the development of high-precision non-nuclear strategic offensive weapons, the reluctance of the United States to abandon plans to deploy strike weapons in outer space, the increasing qualitative and quantitative imbalances in conventional arms and so on. It is a matter of particular concern that the documents and doctrines of some countries provide for a significantly increased role for nuclear weapons in military planning while establishing a much lower threshold for their use. We believe that the continuing practice of so-called NATO nuclear sharing missions, under which non-nuclear-weapon States members of NATO are trained to deploy those weapons, is in direct violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). All those elements increase the risk of nuclear conflict.

History teaches us that attempts to strengthen one's own security at the expense of that of others ultimately fails. Dialogue is the only way forward. Concepts such as equal rights, mutual respect and consensus need to be not only expressed but also put into practice. Only that approach can lead us towards finding a mutually acceptable balance of interests and can ensure that key international security issues are taken into account. We are ready to enter into such a dialogue.

In the current context of increased military and political tension, in order to prevent the most dangerous scenarios and to preserve a strategic balance, we were compelled to take technical and military measures, as announced by the Russian President in his address to the Federal Assembly on 1 March. In particular, it should be noted that all efforts to strengthen our country's defence capacity are in strict compliance with the existing arms control agreements.

Making progress on the elimination of nuclear weapons is possible only by duly taking into account all factors that impact strategic stability and the principle of ensuring equal security for all. That goal cannot be achieved on the basis of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was recently opened for signature. That initiative fails to facilitate progress towards establishing a nuclear-free world, to which we all aspire. Rather, that initiative undermines the relevance and effectiveness of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Such an international agreement is relevant only when it ensures that the nuclear disarmament process is irreversible, that is, once it has already been achieved, However, it is clearly premature to raise the issue of immediate and complete nuclear disarmament.

We are seriously concerned about the situation with regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty. One key State withdrew from ratification and support for the entry into force of that instrument. Under the current circumstances, it requires the support of the entire international community. In that regard, we clearly need to step up efforts at all levels.

We were pleased that the participants in the first session of the Preparatory Conference for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT reaffirmed their commitment to working together to ensure the sustainability and the universalization of the NPT. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the NPT. At a time when there is increased tension over a range of issues on our agenda, the focus should be on preserving the NPT regime and on implementing the decisions taken at previous Review Conferences.

We believe that a balanced approach to the three components of the NPT — non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of atomic energy — is crucial. The emphasis should be on maintaining and strengthening international stability, peace and security. We believe that the basis for work during the current review cycle could be the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference, which remains fully relevant today.

Russia has complied, and always will comply, with its commitments under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We eliminated our chemical arsenal, which was confirmed

by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Any insinuation that Russia supposedly still has, or is continuing to work on, chemical weapons and references to any kind of Russian connection with the incident that occurred in the United Kingdom are absolutely groundless and quite ridiculous. If States making such accusations have any evidence against Russia in connection with that incident, then they should make that evidence known. Responding to such groundless insinuations and attacks is unnecessary and irrelevant. As the Commission is aware, we have sent a list of specific questions to the British Government, and we await detailed answers to those questions — such answers are highly unlikely. If we do not receive such a response, we will presume that this is a deliberate provocation by the authorities of the United States and the United Kingdom.

One of our foreign policy goals is to keep outer space free from nuclear weapons that are not used for peaceful purposes. We believe that that is almost as important as the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Most important, such a goal is practical and can actually be achieved. In order to do so and to prevent an arms race in outer space, we must work on a number of areas simultaneously. We continue to believe that a key issue here is the consideration of the Russia-China draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects. Despite considerable international support and interest in further developing that instrument, we have, most regrettably, still been unable to launch substantive work on it, due to difficulties in agreeing on the programme of work during the Conference on Disarmament.

To render discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space more substantive, last year, along with our Chinese colleagues, we proposed the establishment of a United Nations group of governmental experts on preventing an arms race in outer space. The adoption in December by the General Assembly of resolution 72/27 opened up real possibilities to lay the groundwork for transitioning towards negotiations concerning an international agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We also think it is important to mention the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in Vienna, which is developing guidelines to ensure the long-term sustainability of space activities.

We believe that the United Nations Disarmament Commission can make a significant — and, indeed, invaluable — contribution to such multilateral efforts. We believe that recommendations for the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities could be used to prevent an arms race in outer space — the ultimate goal of the activities of Working Group II. It is our hope that it will be successful.

To save time, I shall not dwell on the ridiculous accusations made by the Ukrainian delegation (see A/CN.10/PV.369) about a supposed violation by Russia of the Budapest memorandum. Our position is well known, and we shall repeat it only when appropriate. Allow me to conclude by assuring you, Madam Chair, of the Russian delegation's fullest cooperation.

Mr. Yaakob (Malaysia): At the outset, let me express my warmest congratulations to you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 substantive session. We also congratulate the other members of the Commission's Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369) and with the statement to be delivered tomorrow by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Malaysia continues to attach importance and significance to the Disarmament Commission, as it is the only specialized body with universal membership in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

On nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Malaysia is proud to be among the signatories of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted last year on 7 July. We believe that the Treaty complements the existing disarmament and non-proliferation international instruments. Malaysia continues to uphold and adhere to the principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which serve as the guiding principles towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. We view the NPT as the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and we therefore call on all

States parties to the NPT to honour their commitments made under that Treaty, without discrimination.

As we speak, delegations are undertaking their final preparations for the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, to be held in Geneva. Malaysia hopes that this year's Preparatory Committee session will achieve tangible results and effective continuity concerning the existing discussions on laying the groundwork for next year's Preparatory Committee session, to be held in New York.

Malaysia reiterates the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons*, issued on 8 July 1996 (see A/51/218, annex). Among other things, the advisory opinion unanimously concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspect under strict and effective international control. We see merit in that reiteration, while noting the urgency for the Commission to conduct its work on the nuclear weapons agenda within that context.

We applaud the efforts and spirit of cooperation during the recent session of the Preparatory Committee for the third Review Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. On its part, Malaysia remains committed to the establishment of adequate and stringent domestic laws to effectively control the circulation of conventional arms and the illicit trade of arms. In the same vein, we continue to support confidence-building measures at all levels in the field of conventional weapons, as part of our collective efforts to strengthen international peace and security. We hope that the necessary negotiations will continue to be conducted in good faith to narrow the gap among the divergent views of Member States in that field.

Malaysia welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly, on 4 December 2017, of resolution 72/26, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as resolution 72/27, focused on no-first-placement of weapons in outer space. We also welcome further dialogue that deepens our understanding on issues pertaining to space security threats and hazards, transparency and confidence-building measures for enhancing space security and areas for practical international cooperation in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

In conclusion, let me assure you, Madam Chair, that Malaysia will play its part in our active discussions on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, including such issues as preventing an arms race in outer space, with a view towards strengthening global peace and security.

Mr. Frimpong (Ghana): My delegation warmly congratulates you, Madam Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide this year's substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We assure you of our full cooperation and support. We welcome the election of the Chairs of the two Working Groups on the agenda items earmarked for deliberations during this session. We also extend our appreciation to your predecessor, our colleague from Argentina, for her tireless efforts during last year's substantive session.

Ghana firmly aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively, (see A/CN.10/PV.369), and we wish to also make the following remarks in our national capacity.

The most dangerous of all known threats to global peace and security are arguably the proliferation and potential use of nuclear weapons. The effects of a deliberate, mistaken or accidental detonation of a single nuclear weapon would have far-reaching and devastating consequences for humankind and across geographical borders. Our concern over the existence of nuclear weapons and the continuous investment by some States in their acquisition, modernization and stockpiling is further heightened by the ever-present possibility of these weapons and related materials falling into the hands of terrorists and other unauthorized non-State actors. For that reason we urge that any available opportunity to come up with pragmatic measures geared towards the total elimination of such weapons be explored to the fullest.

The elimination of nuclear weapons has been on the agenda of the United Nations since the establishment of the Organization. Yet achieving total, irreversible and internationally verifiable nuclear disarmament, as envisaged by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains the foundation of the global disarmament and non-proliferation

regime, has eluded us. It is therefore our hope that the 2020 NPT Review Conference will be able to move beyond the setbacks of 2015 and take forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We also believe that the upcoming United Nations high-level conference on nuclear disarmament, to be held in June, will provide the platform needed for Member States to evaluate progress in the disarmament regime and further advance the overall objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are encouraged by the successful adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017 and the subsequent opening of the Treaty for signature on 20 September 2017. Ghana actively participated in the negotiation process and was among the first countries to sign the Treaty when it was opened for signature. The Treaty has become an indispensable part of the general disarmament discourse and reinforces the objectives of the NPT, particularly article VI, for the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

Ghana maintains the view that using multilateralism to address global disarmament issues is vital to achieving a safer and more secure world. That is particularly critical in the light of the current challenges to peace and security, including the increased threats of terrorism and the existential menace posed by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In that context, we reaffirm the validity of the UNDC as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations disarmament machinery to consider and provide recommendations on issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We welcome the successful conclusion of negotiations and the adoption by consensus of the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons during the UNDC session in 2017. We hope that, with renewed determination, commitment and flexibility in our deliberations, we will achieve similar success in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, where we have, regrettably but consistently, failed to reach consensus in previous cycles.

Ghana is of the view that a world free of nuclear weapons is in our collective interests. We also acknowledge the significant contribution of nuclear-weapon-free-zone instruments, including the Treaty of Pelindaba adopted by African countries, to the overall objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world, and we renew our call on all stakeholders, particularly States in the Middle East, to continue to constructively engage in efforts to ensure that that region is also free of nuclear weapons.

Ghana shares the view that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is also essential for a world free of nuclear weapons, and we renew our call on annex 2 States that have yet to ratify the CTBT to fast-track the process of ratification. Similarly, we believe that future negotiations on a possible fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), ideally under the auspices of the Conference on Disarmament, coupled with such existing frameworks as the NPT, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the CTBT, will effectively promote our overall objective of general and complete disarmament.

The increasing dependence of societies on space-based platforms and satellites for human endeavour in the twenty-first century is threatened by congestion, contestation, competition and the possible damage that self-seeking exploitation might cause, and therefore remains an international security concern. The importance of ensuring the peaceful use of outer space and celestial bodies, including preventing the placement of weapons in outer space and removing dangerous orbital debris, cannot be overemphasized. Against the background of flourishing space activities by States, international organizations and private entities, focusing our efforts on establishing a legally binding instrument to ensure the safety of outer space activities is key if we are to address the fragility of such an environment for the common good and heritage of humankind. It is therefore in the shared interests of all stakeholders to act responsibly in the conduct of outer space exploratory activities.

We welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189) as the most pragmatic approach to safeguarding the space environment for peaceful uses. We see merit in the recommendations contained in the report on the practical implementation of measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, and reaffirm in particular the significance of international cooperation and dialogue in the peaceful uses of outer space. We also welcome the adoption, in 2016, of the African Space Policy and Strategy, which we consider to be an important framework towards the realization of an African outer

space programme within the context of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

In conclusion, my delegation is of the considered view that transparency and confidence-building measures that are developed under a multilateral framework are more likely to be accepted by the wider international community than if they are not developed using such a framework. It is therefore important that the UNDC, which has a universal membership, continue to explore innovative approaches and build on existing international legal frameworks to ensure the long-term sustainability and peaceful use of outer space. Madam Chair, you can count on the cooperation of my delegation in that endeavour.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) for this year's substantive session.

Building upon last year's adoption of consensus recommendations on conventional weapons (see A/72/42, annex), the first in 17 years, the Commission has been convened today to tackle with renewed commitment two core issues in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, namely, nuclear weapons and outer space activities. With the three-year discussion cycle concluding right before the beginning of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which will mark the fiftieth anniversary of that cornerstone treaty on this crucial agenda item, we must make full use of this year's Working Group I deliberations so that our collective efforts come to fruition in the year 2020, in the form of at least a couple of points of convergence among delegations.

In order to achieve our shared goal of a peaceful and safe world without nuclear weapons, we must adopt effective, sustainable and inclusive disarmament measures across the three NPT pillars, in accordance with the 2010 NPT Action Plan. The Republic of Korea is firmly committed to that vision and goal and has taken measures to translate this commitment into action. We have not only actively participated in, inter alia, the substantiated work of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, but we have also made our utmost efforts — through maximum pressure and engagement and working closely together with members of the international community — to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, which is the most serious threat to global security in world today.

With a series of high-level interactions among the parties concerned unfolding at breakneck speed, including the inter-Korean summit to be held on 27 April, the whole world is now paying attention to the evolution of the situation on the Korean peninsula. We will endeavour to keep up that hard-won momentum for the peaceful achievement of the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea, which, in turn, will lead to the establishment of sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. That is indeed a historic opportunity that we should not fail to seize, and we will count on the continued support of the international community in moving towards that end.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the inclusion of the preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) in outer space activities as one of the two main agenda items of this year's session. I would like to commend the work of the Secretariat in preparing a non-paper on cross-cutting outer space-related discussions pursued by the United Nations disarmament machinery and its related bodies.

My special appreciation also goes to Australia for its working paper on a three-fold TCBM proposal. Given the rapidly growing outer space activities by both Governments and the private sector, the focus of our Working Group II discussions should be focused in particular on those measures related to establishing norms of behaviour that would promote safety in outer space activities.

We look forward to making timely progress on a set of guidelines for the long-term sustainability of our space activities within the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. In that regard, the UNDC's deliberations on TCBMs at the current session will contribute to making more tangible progress on this issue at the UNISPACE+50 conference, to be held in Vienna in June.

In conclusion, I can assure you, Madam Chair, of my delegation's full support for the success of this year's UNDC session under your able leadership, and I look forward to constructive discussions over the next three weeks.

Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico congratulates you, Madam, on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for this year's substantive session. You have the support of Mexico in all your efforts, as do all the other members of the Bureau.

The Disarmament Commission is convening in a context of growing concern at the complicated international security situation, which is characterized by uncertainty, risks and threats the likes of which have not been witnessed since the Cold War. We are concerned by the resurfacing of voices in favour of the threat and use of nuclear weapons, which can normalize and trivialize their humanitarian impact. We also find it deeply disconcerting that the commitments and obligations undertaken with regard to nuclear disarmament by the possessors of such weapons have been questioned, and we find disturbing the justifications that we have heard for increasing and improving stockpiles, along with the costs associated with such activities, even as resources for achieving development and sustainable peace dwindle.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the establishment of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations disarmament machinery. This is an opportune moment to analyse the issue of nuclear disarmament and produce results that go beyond this conference room and prove the relevance of the machinery and its mandates. In that regard, I would like to outline some issues that, in our opinion, should be part of the Commission's nuclear-disarmament deliberations, subject to taking them up again in the thematic debates.

Nuclear disarmament has been an outstanding issue for the General Assembly since the legitimate demand it set out in its first resolution, in 1946 (resolution 1 (I)). Nuclear disarmament remains a current and priority issue on the multilateral agenda and continues to represent an agenda of existential importance. Disarmament has an organic relationship with peace. This assertion, which might seem like a platitude, deserves reflection in view of the fact that several delegations are newly disposed to declare that weapons, especially nuclear weapons, sustain peace.

Nuclear weapons, as a result of their power of devastation, humanitarian impact and harmful effects on health, ecosystems, development and the very existence of humankind, as well as their indiscriminate ability to harm innocent civilians, cannot be considered as beneficial in the hands of some and harmful in the hands of others. Such double standards have proven the inaccuracy of such a belief and are an incentive for the proliferation and threat of use of nuclear weapons, which is contrary to international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations and constitutes a war crime. There are no right hands for wrong weapons, to paraphrase the words of former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Thanks to the so-called humanitarian initiative and the Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna Conferences, we have a greater understanding of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons as well as the building blocks on which we must base our urgently redoubled development efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are two mutually reinforcing processes. Something that does not exist cannot proliferate or cause harm. This year also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the only treaty in force to address disarmament and non-proliferation, which constitutes the cornerstone of the regime on non-proliferation and disarmament. We must remember and value the commitments and obligations undertaken under the Treaty, particularly in terms of the provisions of article VI, and of the NPT Review Conferences of 2000 and 2010. Full compliance with all the provisions of the Treaty is not subject to any condition. We the parties must exhaust all the measures at our disposal to ensure the effectiveness of the tenets of the negotiating package with which the NPT was forged, on the so-called three pillars of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

I must express to the Commission our pleasure at the fact that a significant number of States have taken the decision to adopt binding rules to prohibit the development, testing, acquisition, storage, possession, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices on the national, regional and now international levels. Mexico is fully committed to the NPT, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the recently adopted Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We await the early entry into force of the latter two instruments, which will be added to and complement, inter alia, the Treaty of Tlatelolco and other treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the NPT and the CTBT, towards eliminating nuclear weapons in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, and within clearly established deadlines. Those instruments are not mere declarations of intent, and neither can they lead to the automatic disappearance of nuclear weapons; rather, they constitute an adequate legal basis for the process of eliminating nuclear weapons and preventing them from resurfacing. Above all, they demonstrate what the majority of Member States feel about nuclear weapons — the need to eliminate them completely. That is the only way to ensure that nuclear weapons will not be used again. Nuclear weapons cannot be used ever again by any actor, under any circumstances. We reject the placement of nuclear weapons in any form or location. For that reason, we believe it is highly opportune for the Commission to also focus its deliberations on confidence-building measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Mexico reiterates the need for the exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, to be carried out exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries, regardless of their level of economic or scientific development. Likewise, it must be used without detriment to the security of any State, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the 1967 treaty on the issue.

This year in particular is an important one for addressing the issues related to the peaceful uses of outer space, as we will have an opportunity to participate in the work of the UNISPACE+50 conference, and to strengthen the alliances and commitments of States to making space an indispensable tool for the future well-being of our peoples. By adopting documents that implement the results of the UNISPACE+50 conference, we will be able to count on having a greater number of elements to jointly confront the challenges that the international community faces with a long-term vision.

Mexico has the honour of steering the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) plenary and the UNISPACE+50 summit. The agreements reached by those two meetings will be decisive in promoting, through international cooperation, greater access for all countries to space science and technology, as well as the data, services and infrastructure necessary to strengthen accessibility to space.

Space technology applications have multiplied in recent decades thanks to the enormous advances in science. International cooperation is therefore essential in the promotion of research, development and innovation in space science and technology in today's world. Access to space technology promotes the prosperity of our nations, development and better understanding among peoples. Together, the use and deployment of space science and technology benefits humankind in such areas as health, education, telecommunications and broadband satellite services, the environment, agriculture and food security, inter alia. Given the increasing development of connectivity, it is necessary to reduce the digital divide through regional cooperation and the use of space technology. The growing diversification of space activities and the entry of new private actors require that our countries set up a legal framework that provides certainty for the development of activities.

We call upon Member States that have not already done so to accede to the United Nations treaties on outer space and comply with the commitments and obligations established in the field of outer space through General Assembly resolutions, the recommendations of the third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the decisions of COPUOS. In our own region, the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Space Conference of the Americas play a fundamental role.

It is in that context that we must remain vigilant, because scientific and technological advances made in the exploration and use of outer space also make it possible to deploy anti-missile defence systems and other military systems that could trigger an arms race. The existing legal regime is not sufficient to guarantee the non-placement of small arms in outer space, and neither is it a guarantee of the non-use of nuclear weapons, especially in the face of an environment that encourages the threat of use of these previously mentioned weapons. We therefore need to strengthen the existing standards, with measures to increase transparency, trust and global security. Accordingly, confidence-building measures should not replace binding regulatory progress such as new treaties on the subject, in particular a treaty for the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We face the challenge of guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of our planet and improving the conditions of our peoples; it is therefore imperative to maintain and strengthen cooperation at the regional and international levels for the peaceful use of outer space.

Ms. Meitzad (Israel): As this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on assuming the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and assure you of my delegation's support in the upcoming discussions. I would also like to congratulate the Chairs of the Working Groups, the representatives of Jamaica and Belgium, on their election and wish them success in their tasks.

The importance of the UNDC in the context of the disarmament machinery was outlined at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, where it was stipulated that the function of the Commission should be, inter alia, to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and to consider elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. To fulfil that mandate, it is clear that the UNDC must look at issues in a comprehensive manner and in context. The Commission's recommendations should be based entirely on the reality on the ground and strike the necessary balance between what is hoped for and what is possible given prevailing regional and global circumstances.

In that respect, Israel is concerned by arms control and disarmament initiatives that seek to circumvent the complexity of the multilateral arena and/or do not consider the full range of opinions and security interests or the relevant circumstances and their contexts. It will not be possible for such initiatives to achieve the same standing and authority, and neither can they address issues effectively. That is why Israel could not support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It is important to reflect on what has been done so far, focus on implementation, consider the changing circumstances, better understand prevailing realities and verify compliance before we embark upon exploring new venues for arms control and disarmament.

Israel supports a vision of a Middle East free from wars, conflicts and weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. That is a vision to which all the region's inhabitants should aspire based on the hope for peace, mutual recognition, reconciliation and cessation of all acts of terrorism, aggression and hostility. At the same time, Israel believes that arms-control and disarmament processes are inseparable from the contexts in which they exist. Those processes should be built on durable and sustainable confidence-building measures that should be formulated in a way that addresses the relevant circumstances, challenges and threats facing the region.

In recent years, the Middle East has become increasingly destabilized and radicalized. Arms-control treaties have been breached in their entirety by members of the region and norms have been disregarded. The Middle East has become a laboratory for terrorist activity. Unfortunately, chemical weapons are still in use in today's Middle East. The norms against the use of such weapons have been repeatedly violated by States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The situation creates incentives for terrorist groups to acquire those capabilities and to use them. It is non-negotiable that Syria fulfil its international obligations in their entirety, in particular the prohibition of the use and production of chemical weapons. Syria must fully and accurately disclose its chemical arsenal and capabilities.

Iran remains the most significant threat to the security of the Middle East and beyond. Its ballistic-missile programme indicates that the threat posed by Iran has not diminished. On the contrary, the advancement of that programme signals Iran's negative attitude towards the implementation of its international obligations. Iran conducts clandestine activities in the nuclear domain, as well as continued acts of concealment and duplicity, which, taken together with the country's policy of aggression and hostility, raise fundamental questions as to whether players of the region fully understand the duty to comply with international legal obligations.

Against that troubling backdrop, it is clear that any regional arms-control process cannot be detached from the true situation we face. Israel has emphasized repeatedly that a more secure and peaceful Middle East requires all States of the region to engage in a process of direct and sustained dialogue in order to address the broad range of regional security challenges and threats facing players in the region individually and collectively. Such a dialogue, based on the widely accepted principle of consensus, can emanate only from within the region itself and can only address in an inclusive manner the threat perceptions of all parties in the region so as to

enhance and improve their security. Direct engagement combined with trust and confidence-building has always been an essential basis for the creation of a new security paradigm in a region fraught with wars, conflict, the disintegration of national territories and human suffering.

The 1999 report of the Disarmament Commission on its fifty-fourth session (A/54/42, annex I) details many important elements contributing to the necessary foundation for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The report clarifies that such complex and sensitive security architecture should be the product of the specific circumstances of the region concerned and must emanate exclusively from the State within the region concerned and should be pursued by all States in the region. A nuclear-weapon-free zone must also be based on an arrangement at which the States of the region concerned arrive freely and independently.

Israel welcomes the successful deliberations on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons that took place here last year. It is worthwhile to consider and build upon that set of recommendations with regard to conventional arms, but we must also ensure their relevance to the real situation outside our conference rooms. In the Middle East this means addressing the major proliferators and violators of international obligations, namely, Iran.

Finally, on the topic of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space, we hope for good, constructive, realistic and relevant consultations.

Mr. Hansen (Australia): It is a great honour to make this statement in this year in which Australia is chairing the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). The UNDC is a critical element of the disarmament machinery, and Australia will do its part to ensure that this new three-year cycle gets off to a good start.

At the beginning of this new three-year cycle, the word "opportunity" immediately comes to mind. This year we have the opportunity to shape the direction that discussions in the UNDC will take for the remainder of its three-year cycle. The opportunity we have also applies to the special timing of the Commission to coincide with the review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is not often that we can work towards delivering an outcome immediately prior to an NPT Review Conference, in this case the Review Conference to be held in 2020. We should also bear in mind that, should we proceed to a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) in 2021 or 2022, then this UNDC cycle would also be the final opportunity to achieve a consensus ahead of that meeting.

Australia's non-proliferation and disarmament priorities remain very much as those set forth in the working paper presented by Australia to the UNDC on behalf of 26 countries in 2016. Those priorities include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, taking forward verification work, encouraging greater transparency and revitalizing the disarmament machinery. We are pleased that much of that work is moving forward through various dedicated mechanisms, thereby demonstrating that the progressive approach to which Australia subscribed is indeed progressing.

More recently, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has made some promising advances with the agreement last week on five focused subsidiary bodies and coordinators for them. If we want the disarmament machinery to work the way it was intended, the UNDC also needs to reassess its working methods and objectives. The Commission needs to retrain itself to deliberate on focused topics, the outcomes of which can be passed to the CD and other relevant bodies for consideration. If, for example, the outcome of the UNDC Working Group I, on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, had been agreed by consensus last year, we need to ask ourselves what the CD could have done with such a broad document — probably very little. We actively participated in the Working Group and appreciate the efforts of those who chaired and took part in the work, but this new cycle is an opportunity to aim for something fresh, focused and meaningful.

In 1988 the UNDC delivered a consensus outcome on principles of verification; in 1993 it delivered an outcome on regional approaches to disarmament; and in 1999 it delivered an outcome on nuclear-weapon-free zones. The common thread in all of those UNDC outcomes was that they were focused topics. Sadly, 1999 was the last time the Commission would deliver a consensus on nuclear non-proliferation disarmament. Nearly 20 years later such focused work has necessarily shifted to other mechanisms, given the attempts to cover the entire non-proliferation disarmament landscape in one UNDC outcome document.

On topics such as outer space, where Member States are still developing positions and best practices, there is value in broader discussion, particularly where the venues for such discussions in the United Nations remain limited. But on non-proliferation and disarmament, where positions have matured and are increasingly fixed, the UNDC needs to do better. Let us use this cycle, as the Commission has successfully done in the past, to consider a focused discussion, the outcomes of which could be delivered to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the CD and SSOD-IV. Working towards an outcome on the topic of nuclear-risk reduction, for example, might be an interesting step in the direction of a focused discussion. The theme is broad enough for all to contribute but focused in a particular direction.

Turning to the second UNDC agenda item this year, Australia was pleased to support the call for a working group on transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) for outer space activities. As space technology becomes increasingly cost-effective and lower-risk, space has never been as contested, congested and competitive as it is today. The democratization of space, in which access is no longer limited to a handful of State actors, presents a series of new challenges.

Australia believes that the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities presents another opportunity for the UNDC. Building trust and establishing international norms and expected behaviour through non-binding TCBMs offers the best and most immediate approach to enhancing space security. We encourage all to consider the conference room paper that we have submitted and look forward to participating in the Working Group's deliberations.

The Chair: We have exhausted the list of speakers for this afternoon.

Before concluding, I shall give the floor to those delegations that have asked for the floor in the exercise of the right of reply. In that regard, I wish to remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention.

Mr. Ri Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation welcomes your election, Madam, to chair the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this session and wishes you every success.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to exercise its right of reply to address the statements made in today's plenary meeting by some countries, in particular the United States and Japan.

First of all, my delegation wishes to acknowledge the appreciation expressed by some countries for the current atmosphere of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. The touch-and-go danger of war breaking out, which existed on the Korean peninsula for some time, has now been dramatically transformed into a situation favourable for peace and stability, national reconciliation, cooperation and reunification. That transformation is the result of the generous proactive measures that we have put into force in order to bring about real peace and security on the Korean peninsula; it is not the result of the sanctions and so-called maximum pressure that the delegations of the United States and Japan called for again right in this conference room. There will be no change in our position as we struggle to achieve durable peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

As for the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, which is the subject of so much discussion, let me briefly explain. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has developed a nuclear-weapon process that serves as a deterrent so as to protect the State and the people from the continued threat of United States military aggression, including the ongoing nuclear threat, which has lasted some 70 years. As everyone is aware, the most powerful nuclear-weapon State — the United States — has been blackmailing a non-nuclear-weapon State, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, for many years. If the United States had not created a nuclear threat for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we would not have had to respond with nuclear deterrence. From start to finish, the United States has been entirely responsible for the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. The United States and other hostile forces need to wake up to the trends of the times and immediately stop relying on their anachronistic and hostile policies.

My delegation would like to recall that it is time for all States concerned to approach all aspects of this situation with prudence, restraint and patience, and not interfere in the atmosphere being created for peace on the Korean peninsula. It is the unwavering position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

to support global efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Khoshrao (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you, Madam Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on having been elected to steer the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this year's substantive session. We also assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

As usual, the representative of the Israeli regime made unfounded allegations against Iran again today. As those allegations are baseless, it is unnecessary for us even to reject them. By making such allegations, the Israelis are trying to divert attention from their brutality and expansionist policies. In the hands of that regime, those are another type of "WMD": weapons of mass deception. Just as they are skilful in committing acts of brutality and any number of other international crimes, the Zionist regime is also very skilled at deception. However, nothing can cover up the brutality of that regime and the reality of its policies and practices. By accusing others, they want to portray themselves as lambs. But they are not lambs; they are wolves. The proof of that assertion is their recent act of brutally killing nearly 20 innocent Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and injuring hundreds of others. That is their true nature.

They cannot now cry wolf about the security situation in the Middle East. The regime has waged more than 15 wars during its very short lifetime. It continues to occupy territories belonging to its neighbours and has invaded every one of its neighbours — without exception — and even countries beyond the region. It continues to commit and sponsor terrorist acts. It continues to possess all types of weapons of mass destruction and refuses to become a party to treaties banning weapons of mass destruction. It is the only non-party in the Middle East to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Its nuclear facilities and activities are the only facilities in the Middle East not subject to safeguards. It is the only one rejecting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

That is the dark record of the regime. With such a dark record, they cannot make recommendations on, or set conditions for, issues related to regional security in the Middle East.

Mr. Amiya (Japan): The delegation of Japan would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

I would simply like to restate what I already said in my national statement, namely, that a nuclear-armed North Korea will not be accepted and that we need to ensure that North Korea's words about denuclearization and peaceful engagement are turned into concrete actions towards the goal of the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I, too, invoke my Government's right of reply in response to the comments made by the delegation of North Korea.

North Korea's United Nations-proscribed weapons programmes represent a clear, grave threat to international peace and security. The United States strongly condemns North Korea's nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes, which violate multiple Security Council resolutions explicitly prohibiting those activities and any further developments to their proscribed programmes, including tests.

North Korea's missile and nuclear tests and other actions in furtherance of their unlawful programmes serve only to increase the international community's resolve to counter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's prohibited programmes related to weapons of mass destruction. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from actions and inflammatory rhetoric that threaten international peace and stability and to fulfil its international obligations and commitments.

We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage in serious talks on denuclearization. We have consistently made clear that we will not accept North Korea as a nuclear-weapon State. We call on all States to make clear to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its enablers that the continued development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's unlawful nuclear and missile programmes is unacceptable and to take steps to show there are consequences to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's unlawful conduct.

We have called on all States to go beyond their obligations to fully implement Security Council resolutions on North Korea and cut economic and

diplomatic ties with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our commitment to the defence of our allies — including the Republic of Korea and Japan — in the face of those threats remains ironclad. We remain prepared and will continue to take steps to increase our readiness to defend ourselves and our allies from attack, and we are willing to use the full range of capabilities at our disposal against that growing threat.

While we welcome the recent diplomatic overtures from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue and increase until there are concrete actions on denuclearization.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Israeli entity has tried to divert attention away from the real danger in our region and the whole world, namely, the Israeli nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) possessed and developed by the Israeli entity. She has done so by levelling accusations against other countries.

The Israeli entity should be the last one to speak about disarmament or to level such accusations. The Israeli entity is the one that introduced terrorism into our region. The Israeli entity is not party to any of the agreements related to WMDs, whether nuclear, chemical or biological. That entity is developing and upgrading nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well its means of delivery, including missiles with ranges exceeding 5,000 kilometres.

The Israeli entity continues to provide armed terrorist groups, such as Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front and other related armed terrorist groups, with weapons, equipment and ammunition, including toxic chemical substances. Chemical experts from the Israeli entity have trained terrorists to mix chemical substances in order to use them against civilians and military personnel in Syria. We have conveyed that information to the Security Council and the committees concerned with these matters. The Israeli entity has used toxic chemical substances as a weapon against civilians in all of its aggressions against Arab countries. Each day in which we manage to liberate an inch of Syrian territory from the abomination of terrorism, we discover depots full of arms, some of which are modern weapons that have been manufactured by the Israeli entity.

Mr. Ri Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Everything happens for a reason. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has produced nuclear weapons in response to the protracted hostile policy of the United States against it, which has lasted for more than 70 years. That United States policy has been the root of all problems. It has been recognized that excess pressure and sanctions will not resolve issues. My delegation would like to request that the United States and Japan adopt a sincere and responsible attitude to the nuclear issue and to the achievement of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I will be very brief. For our second intervention in the exercise of the right of reply, I would just like to state that, while we welcome the recent diplomatic overtures from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, international pressure on the country will continue and will increase until concrete actions on the issue of denuclearization are taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.